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Annual overview report of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination for 2011/12

Summary

The present report provides an overview of major developments in inter-agency cooperation within the framework of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) covering the period 2011/12. The report focuses on key system-wide policy, and operational and management activities undertaken by CEB to advance a coherent United Nations system response to intergovernmental mandates and priorities. The report also highlights main activities of the three pillars of CEB, the High-level Committee on Programmes, the High-level Committee on Management and the United Nations Development Group, in promoting inter-agency cooperation on matters of system-wide concern.

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I. Introduction

1. Pursuant to resolution 2008 (LX) of the Economic and Social Council, the present report provides an annual overview of the work of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) for the period covering the Board's fall 2011 session and spring 2012 session, held in October 2011 and April 2012, respectively.

2. In response to General Assembly resolution 66/8, which endorsed the conclusions and recommendations set out in the report of the Committee on Programme and Coordination on the work of its fifty-first session, the present annual overview report highlights major activities carried out under the aegis of CEB to enhance system-wide coherence and coordination of the United Nations system in support of and in conformity with intergovernmental mandates. To this end, the Secretary of CEB has held interactive sessions to brief Member States on the sessions of CEB. In addition, exchanges with Member States were also carried out by officials of the Board's secretariat. Detailed reporting on the semi-annual sessions of CEB and its subsidiary machinery can be found on the relevant websites of the Board (www.unsceb.org and www.undg.org).

3. Over the past two decades, the world has been witnessing major changes in the global political and economic landscape that have affected almost every aspect of human life. At the same time, the benefits of globalization have not been shared equally among and within countries. The world's ecosystems are deteriorating rapidly, and environmental degradation is affecting every region and every country. The need for a common vision for the future of the planet and renewed political commitment to put the world on the pathway to more sustainable development has become an overarching goal and key priority of the United Nations system. This trend has also had an impact on the work of CEB during the reporting period.

4. The United Nations system has been called upon by Member States to ensure inter-agency coherence and participation, under the leadership of the Secretary-General, during the preparatory process of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development as well as the Conference itself. In successive sessions, CEB reflected on system-wide contributions to the preparations for the Conference and, in this context, considered elements of the broader global development agenda, including key dimensions of a greener, fairer and more sustainable globalization. Through its subsidiary machinery, CEB also addressed major management and administrative issues with a view to improving the coordination and compatibility of administrative processes across organizations of the United Nations system. In support of operational activities, a top priority of the United Nations system continues to be focused on supporting country efforts to accelerate the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals through United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks, including in countries in crisis and in transition. Particular emphasis also continued to be given to the simplification and harmonization of business practices, strengthening leadership and improving knowledge management. In addition, CEB has also taken further steps in enhancing coherence and coordination among its subsidiary machinery by improving information exchanges, enhancing thematic collaboration and deepening joint programmatic activities.

5. During the reporting period, CEB welcomed the following new members: Christine Lagarde, Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund; José

Graziano da Silva, Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; Koji Sekimizu, Secretary-General of the International Maritime Organization; and Ertharin Cousin, Executive Director of the Word Food Programme.

II. Programme issues

A. Strengthening United Nations system support for sustainable development

6. Supporting Member States in their efforts to advance economic growth, social development and environmental sustainability in an integrated manner has been of paramount concern for CEB and is a centrepiece of the Secretary-General's five-year action agenda. In response to General Assembly resolution 65/152, CEB, under the aegis of its High-level Committee on Programmes, developed several joint contributions of the United Nations system to the preparatory process of the Conference on Sustainable Development aimed at advancing coherence and synergies within the United Nations system on sustainable development.

1. Preparations for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development

7. Member States have stated repeatedly that sustainable development was a key element of the overarching framework for United Nations activities and have called upon the United Nations system to take action to ensure the effective implementation of and follow-up to the sustainable development commitments, programmes and time-bound targets. At its fall 2011 session and spring 2012 session, CEB underscored that sustainable development, with its interlinked economic, social and environmental pillars, remained a top priority for the United Nations system. The Board also recognized that the Conference presented a unique opportunity to reach agreement on a framework for action that puts the world on a more sustainable development pathway. The Board further acknowledged that the challenges of sustainable development require a coordinated approach by the United Nations system in collaboration with other stakeholders in order to find joint innovative and lasting solutions in support of countries' efforts to address economic, social and environmental issues in an integrated manner.

8. CEB supported intergovernmental preparations for the Conference by issuing a joint preambular statement in November 2011 as input to the zero draft of the outcome document for the Conference. That text recognized that the shift to sustainable development presented challenges and opportunities and that the United Nations system was well equipped to assist Member States in the formulation and implementation of enabling policy and regulatory frameworks for sustainable development. The statement further signalled the collective readiness of the organizations of the United Nations system to "support the world's nations and peoples to make sustainable development a reality" (http://www.unsceb.org/ceb/press/20111029_CEB_RIO_COMMON_STATEMENT_FINAL.pdf).

9. At its spring 2012 session, CEB endorsed a second joint statement to be issued to the Conference itself as an appeal to the international community to take decisive action in support of a forward-looking and robust framework for sustainable development which would significantly improve human well-being, social and intergenerational equity, and environmental sustainability. The statement sought to

provide impetus for a political agreement on the steps needed to more rigorously and systematically integrate the three pillars of sustainable development into decision-making and actions by all stakeholders (http://www.unsceb.org/ceb/press/CEBRioStatementFINAL.pdf).

2. Climate change

10. Climate change remains a major concern for Member States and the United Nations system. The United Nations Secretary-General also identified climate change as a priority area in his five-year action agenda. The Board continued to support system-wide efforts in this area by focusing on the need for continued and enhanced inter-agency collaboration and coherence. To this end, CEB addressed climate change in its fall 2011 and spring 2012 sessions.

11. Sharing information on and lessons learned from actions undertaken by the United Nations system in support of Member States' efforts in the implementation of climate change commitments was an important activity pursued by CEB in 2011. At the seventeenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in Durban, South Africa, in November and December 2011, the Secretary-General hosted a high-level CEB event highlighting the topic of "The United Nations System Delivering as One on Climate Change: Helping Countries to Implement the Cancun Agreements". The event brought together the Secretary-General and several executive heads of United Nations organizations in a dialogue with ministers and high-level representatives of parties to demonstrate how joint activities of the United Nations system supported global, regional and national level efforts to address climate change. For example, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the United Nations Environment Programme, the World Bank and the World Food Programme are working together to develop an international collaborative initiative involving governments, universities, NGOs, private sector and other entities to facilitate the adoption of climate smart agricultural practices aimed at increasing productivity, improving rural livelihoods, and building resilience of rural populations.

12. Beyond coordinating system-wide participation in United Nations Climate Change Conferences, the High-level Committee on Programmes, through its Working Group on Climate Change, continued to facilitate a coherent approach and joint action of the United Nations system on climate change. The Working Group promoted programmatic coherence through information and knowledge-sharing, and concrete initiatives aimed at helping Member States in implementing the climate change agenda and streamlining climate-related issues into individual programmatic mandates of United Nations system organizations. For example, the One United Nations Training Service Platform for Climate Change (UN CC:Learn) which includes 32 partners, supports Member States, United Nations agencies and other development partners in designing and implementing results-oriented and sustainable learning to address climate change, while the United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (UN-REDD Programme) assists developing countries in the preparation and implementation of national REDD+ strategies. As a result of a more coherent approach and a growing number of joint initiatives, United Nations support of global, regional and national climate action has been strengthened.

13. CEB extended the mandate of the Working Group on Climate Change in order to further strengthen strategic, programmatic and operational coherence of the United Nations system on climate change. The Working Group will continue to enhance collaboration and joint initiatives among its members, advance a comprehensive approach at the global level to address interconnected multi-sectoral issues related to climate change action, and identify synergies, thus maximizing impact for the global community from the implementation of intergovernmental mandates by United Nations system entities.

3. UN-Oceans, UN-Water, UN-Energy

14. Through its thematic inter-agency networks, UN-Oceans, UN-Water and UN-Energy, CEB addressed key sectoral concerns of sustainable development at its fall 2011 session and spring 2012 session.

15. Oceans play a critical role within the overall framework for sustainable development, and the need to address issues related to oceans is recognized within the process of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development as well as in the five-year action agenda of the Secretary-General. CEB addressed the issue of oceans at its spring 2012 session with a view to strengthening inter-agency collaboration in support of the oceans and the people who depend on them, within the provisions of the 1982 Convention on the Law of the Sea. In addition, UN-Oceans, the inter-agency coordination mechanism on ocean and coastal issues within the United Nations system, provided substantive contributions to the preparatory process of the Conference. Contributions included the preparation of two signature inter-agency publications, "Blueprint for Ocean and Coastal Sustainability" and "Green Economy in a Blue World", the provision of support to the "Friends of the Oceans" group, and the participation in several key ocean events highlighting the interlinkages of sustainable development and oceans.

16. Water is a key element for sustainable development and is closely linked to a number of global development challenges, including food, health, energy, poverty eradication and peace and security. Member States have acknowledged that the United Nations system has an important role to play in supporting countries to achieve water-related goals and to meet emerging challenges by promoting cooperation at all levels. During the reporting period, UN-Water launched a number of flagship reports as inter-agency contributions to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, including the fourth edition of the World Water Development Report, the UN-Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking Water, and the progress report of the Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation of the World Health Organization and the United Nations Children's Fund. UN-Water has also strengthened its role and capacity for engagement in global policy dialogues, advocacy and communications and has taken an active role in advocating for universal coverage of water supply and sanitation services and improved water resources and wastewater management.

17. Energy has emerged as a critical issue on the global sustainable development agenda, with Member States increasingly recognizing the central importance of energy to poverty eradication and human development. UN-Energy, which is a functional network of the CEB High-level Committee on Programmes aimed at strengthening coordination and coherence among United Nations system organizations dealing with energy-related issues, actively supported the Sustainable

Energy for All initiative. UN-Energy contributed to the development of an overarching sustainable energy development goal and clean energy-related targets for consideration at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. Prospectively, UN-Energy, UN-Oceans and UN-Water will more systematically harness synergies and complementarities in the light of the strong linkages among issues related to water, oceans and energy, including through enhanced sharing of knowledge and information.

B. Accelerating the mainstreaming of cross-cutting issues into the work of United Nations system organizations

18. CEB addressed the issue of mainstreaming cross-cutting issues into the work of its member organizations by developing concrete tools, instruments and processes with regard to gender mainstreaming, human rights and disaster risk reduction, in support of intergovernmental decisions calling for coordinated system-wide actions in those areas.

1. Gender equality and the empowerment of women

19. The entities of the United Nations system individually and collectively made significant progress towards mainstreaming gender equality and the empowerment of women into the normative and operational work of the United Nations. In response to Economic and Social Council agreed conclusions 1997/2, CEB endorsed in October 2006 the United Nations system policy on gender equality and the empowerment of women as a means to accelerate gender mainstreaming within the policies and programmes of the United Nations system. To operationalize the Board's policy, a United Nations system-wide action plan has been developed to promote a common understanding, enhance system-wide coherence, and advance a progressive approach to gender mainstreaming. At its spring 2012 session, CEB reviewed the action plan paving the way for its implementation throughout the United Nations system.

20. The action plan, which includes a set of 15 common system-wide performance indicators, constitutes a comprehensive framework for reporting and accountability that is expected to markedly advance gender equality and the empowerment of women by systematically mainstreaming a gender perspective into the policies and programmes of the United Nations system. The system-wide action plan was prepared on the basis of an extensive inter-agency consultation process under the leadership of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.

2. Human rights

21. CEB addressed the issue of human rights at its fall 2011 session and, subsequently, took concrete steps to strengthen the integration of human rights into its work and that of its subsidiary bodies at its spring 2012 session. In addition to peace and security and economic and social progress, human rights is one of the three pillars and core areas of work of the Organization as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. The 2005 World Summit and all major conferences since had reaffirmed the interlinkages among the three pillars and supported further integration of human rights into the work of the United Nations system. In its

resolution 62/208 on the triennial comprehensive policy review on operational activities for development of the United Nations system, the General Assembly further underscored the importance of human rights for United Nations operational activities for development.

22. While good progress towards integrating human rights into the work of the United Nations system has been achieved, CEB recognized that there was a need for more regular, policy-level discussions on human rights to further strengthen policy coherence and integrity across the United Nations system, based on the norms and standards of the Organization. CEB supported a more systematic consideration of human rights issues in its work to advance policy coherence and inter-agency coordination by regularly including human rights themes in the deliberations of its High-level Committee on Programmes. The United Nations Development Group is working to strengthen coordinated United Nations responses to requests from Member States for support in their efforts to fulfil international human rights commitments. It aims to strengthen system-wide policy coherence and collaboration towards the integration of relevant human rights principles and international standards into United Nations operational activities for development.

3. Disaster risk reduction

23. According to the 2011 Global Assessment Report issued by the United Nations inter-agency secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction, the risk of disaster losses is increasing globally, with least developed countries and small island developing States suffering the most from disasters. Member States have called upon the entire United Nations system to make every effort to accelerate the full integration and mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction in all its programmes and activities. In this regard, the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Countries and Communities to Disasters provides a comprehensive international agenda for action in disaster risk reduction at all levels.

24. Building on efforts initiated at its spring 2011 session and ongoing work by the High-level Committee on Programmes, CEB deepened system-wide capacity and coordination to mainstream disaster risk reduction in programmes and operational activities of United Nations system organizations in support of the midterm review of the Hyogo Framework for Action. At the request of CEB and under the leadership of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction, the United Nations inter-agency secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction reviewed the status of mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction into policies, planning and programming of United Nations system organizations.

25. Disaster risk reduction was widely supported within the United Nations system, and a considerable number of concrete efforts to enhance coherence and integration of disaster risk reduction in the work of the United Nations are already being implemented at the global and regional levels. In furtherance of relevant mandates, CEB requested the United Nations inter-agency secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction, in coordination with relevant organizations of the United Nations system, to expand and strengthen United Nations system efforts to mainstream disaster risk reduction into policies and operational activities by preparing a system-wide action plan on disaster risk reduction to ensure the highest possible degree of coherence and effectiveness of the United Nations system in the field of disaster risk reduction, and to more systematically and strategically address core issues and gaps in disaster risk reduction.

C. Strengthening United Nation coordination for sustainable development challenges ahead

26. In follow-up to decisions taken by the General Assembly inviting organizations of the United Nations system to increase their efforts in strengthening coordination and coherence when providing input to a number of forthcoming intergovernmental meetings and conferences, CEB addressed the issue of joint contributions by the United Nations system organizations to the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development to be held by the General Assembly in 2013, and the extension of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development Beyond 2014.

1. Population issues

27. Population dynamics and demographic transformations are among the key challenges facing the international community and have major implications for sustainable development, in particular with regard to food security, use of natural resources and consumption of energy. During the reporting period, the United Nations system has increased its efforts to be more effective in advocating for and assisting countries in addressing challenges arising from changing population patterns. In response to General Assembly resolution 65/234 on the extension of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development Beyond 2014, CEB addressed the issue of population dynamics and acknowledged that the recent passage of the 7 billion world population milestone provided impetus to reflect on the impact of demographic change on sustainable development. The Board asserted that addressing the variety of population challenges requires a joint effort by all stakeholders. Under the leadership of the United Nations Population Fund and in collaboration with organizations of the United Nations system, CEB initiated the development of a joint report that would address population dynamics from a United Nations system perspective and provide guidance for a coordinated response to population realities and anticipated trends.

2. International migration and development

28. Attention to international migration at the global, regional and national levels has been increasing since the holding in 2006 by the General Assembly of the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development. In response to General Assembly resolutions 63/225 and 65/170 on the issue of international migration and development, which encouraged the adoption of a balanced, coherent and comprehensive approach to international migration and development and invited relevant organizations of the United Nations system to provide input to the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, to be held by the General Assembly in 2013, CEB took up the issue at its spring 2012 session. To ensure system-wide coherence and coordination in submitting input to the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, the United Nations Population Fund and the International Organization for Migration, in collaboration with the Global Migration Group, would lead an inter-agency consultation process with a view to preparing an analysis of opportunities and challenges of international migration, as well as draft outcomes and recommendations on migration as an input to the preparatory process for the High-level Dialogue.

III. United Nations development system working together

A. Supporting countries in accelerating the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals

1. Follow-up to the Millennium Development Goals Summit and preparations for the post-2015 framework

29. The 2010 High-level Plenary Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals resulted in a global action agenda for reaching the Goals by 2015, and recommitted all actors to accelerate progress towards that end. The meeting's outcome document provided the strategic guidance for the work of the United Nations system in supporting the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

30. On behalf of CEB, the United Nations Development Group continues to support country efforts to accelerate achievement of the Millennium Development Goals through implementation of the Acceleration Framework and the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks. Recent data indicates that 98 per cent of the frameworks are centred on the Millennium Development Goals. The Acceleration Framework supports the design and implementation of national strategies aimed at achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The Framework helps Governments identify bottlenecks that are preventing progress in achieving the Goals, as well as tested and reliable solutions that can help to overcome such impediments. The Framework builds upon existing national efforts and generates country-specific acceleration plans, which bring Governments and other partners together around the most critical development priorities for that country.

31. Prospectively, the United Nations Development Group will provide support to countries in their preparations for the 2013 review by the General Assembly of Millennium Development Goal progress. To support the Secretary-General in preparing a post-2015 development framework, the United Nations Development Group is also supporting consultation processes in about 50 countries on the post-2015 development agenda and nine regional thematic consultations. The country consultations are aimed at complementing the formal consultations.

2. United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks

32. General Assembly resolution 62/208 called on the United Nations system to strengthen interdepartmental and inter-agency coordination to ensure an integrated, coherent and coordinated approach to assistance at the country level. Towards this end, the United Nations Development Group continued to provide dedicated support to country preparations of United Nations Assistance Development Frameworks during the reporting period.

33. The United Nations Development Group made a significant investment to build the capacity of United Nations country teams in support of country efforts to design and implement high-quality United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks. Strategic planning retreats, which set the strategic base for the frameworks, were organized, bringing together government, civil society and the United Nations country teams to review the major national development challenges, identify the comparative advantage of the United Nations country team and high-priority areas to be translated into tangible framework outcomes. Governments have reported that 94 per cent of all United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks

have ensured alignment with their national strategic priorities. Recent survey data from the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat shows that 98 per cent of the frameworks are centred around the Millennium Development Goals. Data also shows that United Nations country teams have strengthened their collaboration at the policy and programme level.

3. Management and accountability system

34. During the reporting period, the United Nations Development Group commissioned an independent review of the implementation of the management and accountability system in order to identify ways to improve, strengthen and accelerate its implementation. The independent review recognized that much progress had been made and noted a marked improvement in the culture of working and delivering results together. An institutional architecture has been put in place to further support coordination of the United Nations development system at the country level, including the United Nations Development Group Advisory Group, the regional United Nations Development Group teams and the United Nations Development Operations Coordination Office. Full implementation of the management and accountability system is an important priority moving forward.

4. Crisis, post-crisis and transition countries

35. Since the adoption of the 2007 triennial comprehensive policy review, substantial progress has been made in developing the necessary policy frameworks to strengthen the effectiveness of United Nations operations in support of countries in transition from relief to development. Those frameworks, which include policy on the integration of efforts, are set out in the report of the Secretary-General on peacebuilding in the immediate aftermath of conflict (A/63/881-S/2009/304).

36. Eighteen integrated strategic frameworks are now in place to foster coherence among United Nations actors on the ground towards agreed and common strategic goals. The United Nations Development Group also continued to enhance support to strengthen the strategic planning capacity of resident coordinators and United Nations country teams. This enhanced support contributed towards: (a) ensuring that United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks and integrated strategic frameworks are based on national priorities, focused and integrating the work of peacekeeping and special political missions and United Nations country teams; (b) better programming, with an increasing number of joint programmes being undertaken with the peacekeeping and special political missions; and (c) better services provided to the United Nations country team and Governments.

37. During the reporting period, the United Nations Development Group continued its support to the implementation of post-conflict needs assessments as called for by the General Assembly in its resolution 62/208, including by taking steps to enhance the capacity of the United Nations system, the World Bank, the European Union and multilateral development banks on the post-conflict needs assessment methodology through training of experienced practitioners to be deployed to support countries, at their request.

IV. Management issues

A. Harmonization and simplification of business practices

38. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 64/289 on system-wide coherence, the United Nations system is encouraged to continue its efforts to harmonize and simplify business practices through common strategies and operations with a view to generate cost savings and reduce administrative and procedural burdens. The harmonization and simplification of business practices continued to be a key priority of the Board during the reporting period. Work on harmonization is predominantly carried out through the CEB High-level Committee on Management and the United Nations Development Group and their functional networks, and limited to functions and processes whose responsibility rests within the purview of Executive Heads.

39. In the course of the reporting period the High-level Committee on Management and the United Nations Development Group have worked on multiple tracks, with three major objectives: to improve organizations' business models and make their management and administrative processes more coherent and compatible across the United Nations system; to generate cost efficiencies while improving the quality of delivery; and to pursue the behavioural and cultural changes that are needed to modernize the work environment.

40. One key aspect of the work of the CEB secretariat on the agendas of the High-level Committee on Management and of the United Nations Development Group has been to identify and replicate best practices, successful experiences and lessons learned. In this context, the High-level Committee on Management completed a comprehensive compilation and analysis of measures put in place across the United Nations system aimed at improving efficiency and control costs, as well as challenges faced. The results of this work were provided as a system-wide contribution to the discussion on efficiency undertaken by the United Nations Secretary-General under the auspices of the Deputy Secretary-General.

41. The work programme of CEB on harmonization and simplification is also supported by the Harmonization of Business Practices Plan of Action of the High-level Committee on Management, which received funding of about $10.5 million from the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. To date, close to $4.6 million has been allocated to projects that support harmonization and simplification initiatives in the areas of human resources, procurement, finance and budget, information and communications technology, and training and knowledge transfer. Additional projects amounting to about $2 million are currently being developed.

1. Harmonization and simplification of business practice at the country level

42. CEB, in particular through its plan of action for the harmonization of business practices, has increased its focus on country level harmonization in response to findings of the high-level joint mission conducted in 2010 by the United Nations Development Group and the High-level Committee on Management to identify bottlenecks in business practices at the country level. The annual report of CEB for 2010/11 (E/2011/104) provided information on the outcome of the mission.

43. In order to support field implementation, collaboration with the United Nations System Staff College is continuing. In response to the recommendation for an

integrated approach to programme and operations at the country level, over 300 programme and operations staff from the 2011 United Nations Development Assistance Framework roll-out countries were trained on how to integrate programming, business operations and joint funding — an initiative jointly funded by the High-level Committee on Management and the United Nations Development Group. The Committee and the Development Group are now working with the Staff College to identify ways to continue to support the integration of programmes and business operations in light of changes in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework support structure. In addition, the United Nations Development Group has developed and implemented a roster system managing technical support and resources in various operational fields in support of country-level harmonization and simplification efforts. The roster system is developed on the basis of training courses, which have been developed jointly by the High-level Committee on Management, the United Nations Development Group and the United Nations Staff College.

44. In the area of joint procurement, a joint High-level Committee on Management/United Nations Development Group global survey was completed, which showed a 12.5 per cent average monetary saving on total procurement value of goods/services jointly procured at the country level as well as a range of non-monetary benefits. The survey also included details on challenges and bottlenecks experienced at the country level in the area of harmonization and simplification. In addition, the Procurement Network of the High-level Committee on Management is implementing a project to improve collaboration in procurement in the field under the leadership of the United Nations Children's Fund. The project is focused on enhancing inter-agency cooperation in the area of procurement by identifying necessary adjustments to organization-specific guidance and to inter-agency guidelines on procurement. Implementation of the project, which is funded through the plan of action for the harmonization of business practices and is carried out in coordination with the United Nations Development Group, includes the creation of tools for operations management teams and training materials for inclusion in organizations' training programmes.

45. With regard to inter-agency coordination in the area of human resources, the Human Resources Network of the High-level Committee on Management is supporting a project, also funded through the plan of action, which is aimed at harmonizing recruitment and selection processes, and the corresponding legal frameworks, for General Service and National Officer positions at the country level. This was identified as one of the many obstacles to working in a Delivering as One mode by the joint mission of the High-level Committee on Management and United Nations Development Group undertaken in 2010. The project builds on an early review and comparison in the context of the plan of action for the harmonization of business practices, of human resources practices, policies and procedures in the United Nations system, with specific focus on those that pertain to field staff. The initiative has the strong support of the staff federations, and will be led by the United Nations Educational Scientific, and Cultural Organization, with pilot projects in Uruguay and Viet Nam.

46. In the area of information and communications technology, a proposal by the inter-agency Information and Communications Technology Network, under the leadership of the World Food Programme, is aimed at consolidating and harmonizing data communications services in country offices, building on the

experiences of similar projects in Mozambique and the United Republic of Tanzania. Once fully implemented, the project will improve efficiencies by allowing agencies to share access to global communications services.

47. In the area of common services, the United Nations Development Group finalized the business operations strategy guidelines and a suite of supporting tools that promote the development of common business operations at the country level and provide guidance to United Nations country teams. In addition, 60 staff members of the United Nations system organizations were trained in common services methodology. In the area of common premises, support was provided to 18 Governments and United Nations country teams with the development of common premises.

48. In the area of joint funding approaches, the United Nations Development Group also supported the application of common budgetary frameworks and carried out work concerning the establishment of Multi-Donor Trust Funds and One Funds, establishment of a clear fiduciary management oversight system, and strengthening country-level capacity in making strategic decisions with regard to funding United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks. The United Nations Development Group also launched an independent global assessment aimed at identifying results of the harmonized approach to cash transfers programme and enhancing the quality and efficiency of the implementation of the harmonized approach. The global assessment reported that 19 out of 140 countries to be compliant with the harmonized approach. For 2012, the United Nations Development Group is aiming to undertake revisions of the harmonized approach to cash transfers framework which are expected to lead to a lowering of the costs of implementation and will address recommendations made in the report.

2. Harmonization and simplification of business practices at the global level

49. As the work of the High-level Committee in Management more broadly focuses on corporate management policies, the Committee, through its plan of action for the harmonization of business practices, is funding several initiatives with global impact.

50. The most advanced project of this kind, co-led by the World Health Organization and the International Fund for Agricultural Development, is in the area of financial management and aims at putting in place common and/or harmonized treasury services. As reported in the annual overview report of CEB for 2010/11 (E/2011/104), a feasibility study was carried out by the Committee's Finance and Budget Network. The study identified several areas where greater inter-agency collaboration could lead to savings and efficiency gains within existing rules and regulations. Those areas include banking services, payments, foreign exchange transactions, risk management and investments. The potential for efficiency gains and reduction in costs are significant and a detailed picture of the financial impact of the proposed collaboration is expected to be available by the end of 2012.

51. In response to General Assembly resolution 64/289, the CEB secretariat, in collaboration with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, has continued its work on the development of a United Nations system-wide financial statistics database and reporting system. That project, which is on target for completion by June 2012 and is also funded by the plan of action for the harmonization of business practices, is intended to simplify, improve and modernize the collection and reporting of system-wide financial statistics.

52. The Committee's Procurement Network has been particularly active in 2011 and 2012. A current priority for the Network is the incorporation of the model policy framework for vendor eligibility into United Nations system organizations' internal processes. The framework allows for the introduction of a common decision mechanism for dealing with suspect vendors and responds to the need for transparency, accountability and effectiveness in procurement. The Network is also continuing its focus on collaborative procurement. Joint work in the areas of freight forwarding and warehousing and freight insurance has been completed. In addition, a collaborative inter-agency procurement initiative on vehicles has been launched under the leadership of the United Nations Development Programme. These collaborative initiatives have the potential to reach considerable annual cost reductions, compared to previous contracts. The Network is also carrying out a study led by the International Atomic Energy Agency on spending trends in the United Nations system, in order to identify additional areas where collaborative procurement might lead to efficiency gains for the system.

53. In response to calls from Member States for increasing participation of developing countries and economies in transition in the procurement process of the United Nations, the Procurement Network is continuing its work on the United Nations Global Marketplace, on professional development of procurement professionals and on supplier access. Moving forward, the Network is emphasizing the importance of simplifying access to United Nations procurement. To achieve this objective, the Network is looking to simplify vendor registration which will enhance access to procurement processes for new vendors.

54. CEB, through its Human Resources Network, held a preliminary debate on the issue of personnel working for United Nations common system organizations on non-staff contracts. In order to accelerate progress in ensuring comprehensive, sensitive, coordinated and consistent support to staff and, where appropriate, other civilian personnel affected by critical incidents in the line of duty, as well as to their families, the Committee will undertake a stock-taking exercise to identify best practices, gaps and problem areas; clarify scope; and identify and explore differences in eligibility and coverage for different categories of personnel.

55. The CEB secretariat facilitates the negotiations on the agreements between organizations of the United Nations and international associations of interpreters and translators. It ensures that the agreements which regulate the conditions of employment of short-term staff performing interpretation, translation and related functions are adhered to by all parties. The agreement with the International Association of Conference Interpreters is negotiated every five years. The agreement with the International Association of Conference Translators has not been reviewed since 1991 and is therefore currently being realigned to the current realities of the United Nations common system. In 2011-2012, negotiations with the International Association of Conference Interpreters and the International Association of Conference Translators have been ongoing with a view to reaching new agreements by 1 July 2012. Monthly net rates for interpreters and translators are calculated and published by the CEB secretariat.

56. In March 2012, the High-level Committee on Management completed its review — in consultation with the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund — of the mandatory age of separation, including innovative and flexible modalities in applying the mandatory age of separation, and transmitted its report to the

International Civil Service Commission in view of the Commission's upcoming consideration of this matter. The Committee recognized that there was no pressing financial need to raise the retirement age from the perspective of the Pension Fund. The harmonization of practices and the introduction of flexible retirement programmes could instead represent areas to explore further.

57. Supporting organizations in attracting and retaining a talented and mobile workforce is a priority for CEB. In this context, the High-level Committee on Management has given priority to the development of tools to support increased mobility within and between organizations. At its spring session, the Committee endorsed the Inter-Organization Agreement Concerning the Transfer, Secondment or Loan of Staff among the Organizations Applying the United Nations Common System of Salaries and Allowances. The Agreement, which came into effect on 1 January 2012, provides the first building block of a framework to foster mobility throughout the system. In view of future discussions by Member States on mobility within the United Nations, the Committee will continue its work, addressed by a working group established by the Human Resources Network, under the leadership of the United Nations Secretariat. The Network also established a working group to identify common elements of performance appraisal systems across the United Nations organizations. The CEB secretariat issued the annual report on personnel statistics in May 2012.

58. In order to improve system-wide planning and budgeting for information and communications technology, the Information Communications Technology Network initiated a project that assists organizations in analysing the cost of information and communications technology. Led by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, this project will improve the ability of the United Nations system to budget and plan their investments in information and communications technology on the basis of comparative information on costs.

59. Data communications services remain at the heart of information and communications technology operations for many organizations, and the Information Communications Technology Network has initiated several projects that allow for increased harmonization across the system. One project, called the United Nations Core Gateway will, for the first time, allow for the interconnection of internal agency networks, thereby allowing for an unprecedented ability to communicate easily and efficiently across agencies. In addition, the United Nations Secretariat is leading an effort for all agencies to migrate to the latest version of the Internet Protocol. The entire global Internet will be required to adopt this protocol in the coming years, and it offers a unique opportunity t harmonize and standardize agency networks.

60. In addition, the Information Communications Technology Network continues to address the issue of cybersecurity, and during the first-ever global United Nations system conference of Chief Information Security Officers, led by the International Telecommunication Union, agreed to adopt shared standards and build common awareness training modules.

B. International Public Sector Accounting Standards

61. The United Nations system is increasingly using International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) as an instrument to improve the quality of financial

reporting, thereby increasing transparency and accountability. Twenty-four organizations of the United Nations system are now implementing IPSAS (with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS being the latest implementing organization). Thirteen organizations, with adoption dates ranging from 2012 to 2014, are currently in the process of IPSAS implementation. A list of organizations and their IPSAS implementation dates, as at 31 July 2011, is provided in annex I to the fourth progress report of the Secretary-General on the adoption of IPSAS by the United Nations (A/66/379).

62. All organizations that will implement IPSAS from 2012 to 2014 have reported to be on track with their project timelines. Implementation issues common to many United Nations system organizations have been closely monitored, discussed and reported by the System-wide Task Force on Accounting Standards of the High-level Committee on Management. The adoption of IPSAS is expected to substantially enhance the level of comparability of financial statements issued by the United Nations system organizations. With 10 United Nations system organizations having successfully implemented IPSAS by 2011, there is greater empirical evidence relating to harmonization of financial reporting. During 2011 and 2012, the system-wide IPSAS team carried out a comparison analysis of the IPSAS-compliant financial statements of eight United Nations organizations. In 2012, a Working Group was established by the Task Force on Accounting Standards to analyse IPSAS benefits and identify good practices on the basis of existing experiences in IPSAS implementation by United Nations system organizations with a view of harnessing IPSAS benefits for the system-wide level.

C. Safety and security of staff

63. CEB attaches highest importance to the issue of staff safety and security. Through the High-level Committee on Management and under the leadership of the Department of Safety and Security of the United Nations Secretariat, CEB has continued to make consistent progress on issues relating to staff safety and security with the active engagement by all members of the Inter-Agency Security Management Network. As of 1 January 2011, the new security level system has been operational. This new system, together with the development of a more robust threat analysis programme, allows for the analysis and rating of threats globally by using common criteria.

64. At its fall 2011 session, the CEB High-level Committee on Management endorsed the last outstanding piece of the redesigned United Nations Security Management System, which responds to the complex and shifting security challenges faced by United Nations staff, and to the adoption of the "how to stay" in lieu of "when to leave" approach: the programme criticality framework. This new tool, which was developed after extensive consultations at headquarters and field levels, including field testing in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya and Somalia, will help decision-making around programme presence in challenging country situations. The programme criticality framework will be rolled out in 12 pilot countries, and a consolidated progress report, including lessons learned and recommended adjustments, is expected in the beginning of 2013.

65. Progress has also been made regarding policy formulation in collaboration with the Inter-Agency Security Management Network. In the course of the reporting

period, the High-level Committee on Management endorsed a series of new and updated policies on road safety, arrest and detention, close protection, hostage incident management, relations with the host country on security, and fire safety. In addition, the Department of Safety and Security and the Inter-Agency Security Management Network are currently developing a policy and guidelines for the use of private security companies. The policy will be submitted to the Committee and CEB for approval at their fall 2012 sessions.

66. Under procedures set up for the United Nations Medical Emergency Response Team which had been first endorsed by the Committee in 2004, followed by an endorsement of the medical directors plan in 2009, the Team was mobilized within 24 hours in the case of the bombing in Abuja in August 2011. The concerted response by the Critical Incident Stress Counselling Unit of the Department of Safety and Security, the medical emergency teams and the security and administrative components of the agencies, funds and programmes was recognized as a commendable example of a coordinated and effective system-wide intervention. This was owing largely to the availability of greater resources and to the lessons learned in the aftermath of earlier attacks against the United Nations in Iraq and Algeria.

V. Coordination between the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination and other jointly financed bodies

67. Member States have consistently supported continuous cooperation between CEB and other jointly financed coordination bodies. In 2011, the CEB secretariat continued its increasingly active and regular interactions with those bodies, in particular with the Joint Inspection Unit and the International Civil Service Commission. In this regard, the CEB secretariat has sought to strengthen its interactions and cooperation through the acceleration of comments on system-wide reports of the Joint Inspection Unit and the more frequent participation of the Unit and the International Civil Service Commission in the meetings of the subsidiary machinery of CEB. In addition, regular exchanges are managed with oversight bodies such as the Office for Internal Oversight Services.

68. The International Civil Service Commission is regularly invited to contribute its views on relevant issues before the High-level Committee on Management, and participates in all meetings of the Committee's Human Resources Network and in most of the activities of its task forces and working groups. Reciprocally, the CEB secretariat participates in all sessions of the Commission and is involved in many of its working groups considering issues of system-wide importance such as on mobility and hardship, standards of conduct and others. In July 2011, the Network organized a one-day retreat with members of the International Civil Service Commission to develop closer working relations and enhance collaboration. In other areas of cooperation, the CEB secretariat also produces and shares personnel statistics data, analysis, system-wide data compilation and studies with the Commission.

69. The subject of closer coordination between CEB member organizations and the Joint Inspection Unit continues to be a priority. The CEB secretariat continues to encourage member organizations, among other actions, to ensure a good information

flow between each organization and the Joint Inspection Unit as well as coordinate action on the recommendations and programme of work of the Joint Inspection Unit. Concerning the programme of work of the Joint Inspection Unit, while organizations of the United Nations system have always contributed to this process, the CEB secretariat also assisted the Joint Inspection Unit in the identification of relevant and useful topics that it may consider in its programme of work for 2012. In addition, CEB and its high-level committees continue to look at ways to further enhance cooperation between the Secretariat and the Joint Inspection Unit. Inspectors are regularly invited to participate in meetings of the networks of the High-level Committee on Management to exchange views during the preparation of the reports of the Joint Inspection Unit, as relevant. The United Nations system welcomed the increased system-wide perspective of the work of the Joint Inspection Unit as contained in its medium-term planning and revised Strategic Framework for 2010-2019. While the Joint Inspection Unit has increased its system-wide focus with an average of eight to nine reports up from four to five, the CEB secretariat has continued to perform its activities in support of the work of the Joint Inspection Unit within existing capacities.

VI. Conclusions

70. During the reporting period, CEB, under the leadership of the Secretary-General, has made significant progress in taking effective and coordinated action on a wide range of programme, management and operational issues in support of intergovernmental mandates to ensure that the United Nations system collaborates closely on issues of system-wide concern. With respect to the mandate of CEB to support and reinforce the coordinating role of intergovernmental bodies, the Board harnessed synergies and complementarities among the organizations of the United Nations system in various areas, particularly by contributing to the preparation of the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. In addition, CEB supported countries in their efforts to accelerate the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and advanced coordination in the area of harmonization and simplification of business practices both at country and global levels.

71. Enhancing the transparency and accountability of CEB to Member States has been one of the Board's priorities during the reporting period. Direct and substantive dialogue between CEB and Member States was carried out by the Secretary of the Board as well as officials of the Board's secretariat. CEB also continued its cooperation with other jointly financed coordination bodies, in particular with the Joint Inspection Unit and the International Civil Service Commission and strengthened its cooperation with those bodies on issues of common concern.

72. Looking ahead, the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development is expected to have system-wide implications for the further integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development into the work of United Nations system organizations. This will require a coherent and coordinated response by the members of CEB to accelerate follow-up and implementation.